

Tale of the Lonely Solar System Heart

You left, and I slipped through the crack in the sky that opened up when the world ended.

Not that it ever really does.

I walked with Death for a few years and learned how he keeps a shard of every broken heart in his shoes, you should see the way he leaves bloody footprints when day dissolves to night. I never knew that Life kisses the sun before she hands it to him and sometimes the tears can't stay in her eyes. They look at each other but never speak. But I know they sleep facing each other.

I thought about you when the sun exploded.

Heaven isn't what you think it is, but neither is Hell. Both are quiet. Both are full of people looking up, people looking down, people doing anything to avoid meeting their own eyes in the mirror. To look around and realize they didn't find what they were looking for. Or maybe that they did. The sinners disappear after dinner, but so do the saints.

Life started staring at the moon more often and Death filled his pockets with shards, too.

The stars whisper, yes, but they cry more- high keening in the night that sounds like *I waited*

(Is this what kept me up at night?)

It forces the planets to run, run, run in rhythm before time runs out. One day Venus had a heart attack trying to keep up with Earth. He had never looked back to even see her- the first time he saw her was shattered at his feet. The others stopped running but no one stood stiller than Earth. You could almost hear her heartbeat again when the universe prayed her goodbye.

I thought about you during Pluto's last lullaby.

After a million generations, people almost start to make sense. I keep hoping they'll figure it out someday, that each life is just a reflection of a thousand before it, that the string connecting any of us to now, to here, is thinner than my voice when I call to you.

(Did you hear it? Even now?)

Maybe then the dark circles under Life's eyes would disappear and the tightness holding this universe and the next together would loosen. These atoms are old and begging to fall apart.

God said He's sorry it all worked out this way, but reminded me that every end is just the beginning. He's been through this a few times before. I asked Him if it's easier to remember or forget, I asked Him if there's someone He misses too. He turns his eyes toward the Milky Way and closes them. He doesn't answer, but I don't blame Him. I remember how that part of creation always tasted like loss.

He told me I could see you again, if I wanted.

But I can't.

Because I'm terrified I'll stand before you, heavy with the weight of eternity and say "An endless number of galaxies and years and I've never found anyone else like you," and you'll simply spread your hands before me and say "I never asked you to."